



On Kashmiri Men: Disappearance, Nonbeing, Islam

Zunaira Komal

INTRODUCTION

“There are no women in the third world.”¹ Neither are there any men in Kashmir. Having said this, I am, like Sara Suleri, “damned by my own discourse.”

Let me begin again. Imagine this: At an academic conference, in an all-day symposium titled “Gender, Sexuality, & Occupation,” a small steady group of Kashmir studies scholars attempt to introduce the question of military occupation to gender analysis. In one of the discussions, #MeToo and its South Asia-specific off-shoot #SavarnaList—a list naming primarily upper-caste Hindu Indian men responsible for sexual assault/harassment—is brought into focus.² The scholars in the room tweet at the larger conference that a discussion pertaining to #SavarnaList will be happening in the gender-occupation room. As the time for that discussion nears, the room begins filling with Indian academics. Chairs are drawn in from other rooms, then promptly abandoned for standing room, until people resort to sitting on the very tables themselves. This newly arrived audience is ready to take account of the “male dominated” academy (suddenly the unevenness of caste, religion, and nation disappear). A rapid conversation about holding “men” accountable begins, in what is now, ironically, an inter-Savarna debate. In a stroke of inspiration, one newly arrived Indian feminist—R—strikes an excited chord: she suggests that this

Z. Komal (✉)

University of California, Davis, CA, USA

e-mail: zkomal@ucdavis.edu

gathering should analyze the ways in which female subjectivity is *occupied* by patriarchal dominance! Someone who had been present at the aforementioned symposium asks R about her absence when gender in relation to Indian occupation was under consideration. R was at other important panels, is the heated response. The other academic wryly remarks: “occupation disappears feminism, I guess.”³ This crowd, absent all day for other important talks, suddenly present in their full force, now discuss *real* feminist concerns. And on and on the quickly souring inter-Savarna spectacle goes.

Eventually, some Kashmir sympathizers offer good intentions, apologies, and promises. Most begin and end their speeches emphasizing *peaceful* solutions, *dialogue*, and *constitutional means* to address the Kashmir Question. Everyone knows what is not being said, though we play along. But soon enough, the circulating affect that charged the room is made apparent by a famous leftist Indian filmmaker. He expresses horror at the violation of democracy by the Indian state but also cautions against the “opportunism” of the Kashmiri insurgency. He insists we must condemn this “fundamentalism” and organize around a “common humanity” (*insaniyat*) to resolve the Kashmir Question. The undergirding Islamic bogeyman everyone had been tiptoeing around finally materializes. No one asks what he means by *insaniyat* because we all understand whom it excludes. It is impressed upon the audience that the militancy achieves nothing, since it is a continuation of the “double” suffering of Kashmiri women—at the hands of the Indian military and at the hands of their own men. The conversation on gender and occupation is now returned to us properly reframed as a preoccupation about Kashmiri Muslim men. Tired, I can only say, “there are no men in Kashmir.”⁴

NONBEING

What this event gestures to is not simply a desire to save the Muslim woman—a desire that will now be readily apparent as problematic (let us call this Feminism 1).⁵ Instead, now—almost as a solution/reaction—what is sought are the Muslim women who do not need to be saved but who, of their own agency, perform not only resistive acts but also heroic castration of their own men (Feminism 2). These positions are often posed as conflictual, in a sort of Gramscian “war of positions” if you will, in which there are multiple fronts to occupy, from the most right-wing versions of statist feminism that justify the occupation of Kashmir, to positions that support Kashmiri autonomy and privilege diversity, inclusion, and global solidarity with women fighting their own battles at home under the global banner of womanhood. It is this latter discourse of Feminism 2 that I am concerned with. In a later section, I will analyze some works by popular figures of the Indian liberal-left—Vijay Prashad, Urvashi Butalia, Arundhati Roy—that reveal that this mask of a debate conceals how, within this war of positions, as we nudge slightly left or right, all sides maintain carceral consensus which rotates around the figure of Islam, as an intensely masculinized threat.⁶

Though gender confers no certitude and has undergone de-essentializations, this latter grammar of gender still insists on difference “between” the two or multiple genders, as if sexual difference could be a substantial thing mapped neatly onto discrete bodies.⁷ Alenka Zupančič (2012) notes that it is precisely the nonexistence of this sexual difference (“there is no...”) that poses the most radical challenge.⁸ By this Zupančič does not mean a simple absence of difference. But neither is it a question of identity. It is not a “nothing,” but neither is it “something.” It is a nothing *with consequences*, more precisely. Like coffee-without-cream is altogether different than coffee-without-milk, she jokes; what is subtracted (cream/sexual difference) has implications for what is thought to be present (coffee/being). Thus, this nonexistence emerges as a question to the ontological (to being-qua-being), producing being as “out-of-beingness.” The sexual emerges precisely as the very founding and failure of being, something that disorients rather than gives identity, a stumbling block to the realization of any wholeness of being that can be posited.

And yet, in the prescription and demand of identity, this nonexistence-with-consequences, this out-of-beingness implicated in the nonlocatability of sexual difference, is covered over. Not only is the fundamental challenge of this nonlocatability lost, but this Indian grammar of gender reveals itself to not be so distant from the state’s position on the occupation of Kashmir.⁹ Muslim women are focused on almost as a corrective to the state’s (and official discourse’s) preoccupation with the Muslim man. What is this supposed to amend? Does it amend? What is maintained through this resort to identity (even if more complex)?

We can understand this through two related moves in Frantz Fanon’s ([1952] 1986) work: (first) the “colonizer’s invitation to identity,”¹⁰ which (second) covers over the fundamental question of nonbeing under colonialism. Fanon demonstrates the colonial drama of identity as an impossible task. “Overdetermined from without” (116), one arrives too late (121), and the Other’s name-giving shatters any attempts to grasp being.¹¹ Identity is never a self-same process of affirmation of something a priori; instead, it is the production of something that is imposed and impossible to accept for the colonized. The task of colonial artifice is to bring about total identification with this absent-present image (“[I] made myself an object,” 112), while *denying the drama* that undergirds its *impossible* character. Which is to say, colonialism is less a process of loss of being than the absence and invention of it. And it is from this space of impossibility that the colonized can begin to articulate the subversive drama of nonbeing, since the colonizer in its paranoia decides too soon who the colonized are. A Kashmiri woman is after all only a woman, a Kashmiri man after all a man.

The colonial invitation to identity covers over this drama of nonbeing, the internal infestation and division produced by colonialism against which the colonized assert not being-as-such but reveal its very impossibility. Stated differently, the struggle for liberation in Kashmir signals the land and people’s

incomplete absorption into the Indian project, pointing to the state's failure to realize itself as whole. Kashmir reveals the failure of India's wholeness (being-qua-being), and the very covering over of this gap/cut is what enables India to fantasize itself as whole, and repeatedly fail, thereby generating paranoia.

This discussion of Fanon and Zupančič is key to anything I hope to elaborate in the rest of this essay. For it is precisely the anxiety generated by the unknowability of difference, this redoubled impossibility of being, that is displaced through paranoia about the Other.¹² I intend to examine how a certain Indian grammar enables Islam to become the gendered ground from which anti-Kashmir claims are made, a process in which especially the Kashmiri Muslim man comes to stand in for the colonizer's paranoia, while the colonizer inhabits precarity to justify defense. How is it that the Kashmiri Muslim man is rendered spectral—paradoxically hypervisible and disappeared, everywhere and nowhere, excessive and evacuated? The insistence that the difference-that-exists is gendered substitutes the real antagonism of the occupation, enabling secular liberal identifications between women qua women. In fact, in particular discourses of identification with the Kashmiri Muslim woman, the state *itself* is rendered helpless while the Kashmiri Muslim man emerges as an excessive Islamic figure. We will also see how this grammar loses coherence when it is confronted by the threat of Kashmiri women's militancy, showing how it is not simply gender, but the way gender is mediated in relation to Islam, that produces carceral consensus.

My goal, however, is not to undergo another de-essentialization that then redraws a boundary elsewhere to inaugurate a re-nuanced category for inclusion. Instead, what might it mean to think the limit of politics of admissibility ("there is no...")? To halt the search. For this reason, I hope to keep my task rather simple. I aim to do no more than dwell in the catastrophe of identity when exiting diagnosis is made impossible. What I wish to do is tentatively stay with the vexed idea: there are no men in Kashmir.

DISARTICULATION

In the norms of recognition conferred by the gender grammar of Feminism 1 and 2, how is the real antagonism of the occupation obfuscated?

Sahar Ghumkhor (2020) has pointed out that in the Western imaginary, one cannot simply call to complicate the Muslim woman, to ask for a more qualified/hyphenated account, since she cannot be divorced from the discourses that produce her (19). The popular additive-list method (of listing gender, sexuality, race, class—"invariably closed with an embarrassed 'etc.' at the end") aims to qualify the universal position of the woman (Schueller 2005). Its shorthand "women *and* people of color" works to enable liberal identification and eliminate unevenness between categories of gender and race (ibid). Instead of an earlier absence of race, this incorporation by elision of difference reflects a becoming-prosthetic of the category "of color" to the larger analysis of gender feminism is interested in (Puar 2012).

Something similar unfolds in the dynamics of the conference mentioned previously. However, instead of race we have the figure of Islam (albeit racialized) that is both excluded (in the figure of the Kashmiri man) and included by elision of difference (in the Kashmiri woman). So, to this previous analysis of race-gender conflation, one might add that a discourse of identity remains purposively blind to the organization of secular power, proposing multicultural distinctions pertaining to the content of identities, of which Islam is not one.¹³ Gil Anidjar (2003) has argued that Islam features in the secular colonial encounter as a unique type of enemy: not a racial enemy, or a theological enemy, or even a political enemy, but as an exemplary enemy to the very notion of *the* political itself (49). The “political itself is therefore put under question from a certain outside,” making Islam interior-exterior threat, both nonpolitical and enemy of the political (ibid.). This becomes a repeated concern for the secular political which aims to regulate and now “liberate” sexual difference, and frequently posits Islam as the antithesis of the universal project of emancipation (Scott 2011). We must, therefore, understand the failure of discourses of identity to grapple with Islam as more than the mere “exclusion” (say of the raced man), but rather, at play is a fundamental opposition posed by the Islamic as a force of negation of political *capacity* as such.

The heightened focus on the Kashmiri Muslim Woman, or the Muslim Woman of Color in general, discloses a fantasy of extending political capacity. She is endowed with *potential* for the political, if, for example, the veil is shed and she ceases to embody the public face of Islam (Ghumkhor 2020). The military’s Operation Sadbhavna (Operation Goodwill) focused on women’s education in Kashmir is revealing of this investment in empowerment through extending political capacity (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009). Recall, here, the colonizer’s “invitation to identity.” Conversely, the Muslim Kashmiri man as militant stands opposed to her and outside the emancipatory/the political, all the while exerting pressure on it as the enemy of the said political. Darryl Li (2020) notes that while there has been overwhelming concern about the lack of or reclaiming of the Muslim woman’s agency, what remains a source of deep paranoia is the *excess* of Muslim male agency (110). One hears incessantly of the state’s need to “neutralize” the threat of the Kashmiri militant man (Kashmir Police, 2021). It is this paradoxical *lack* of political capacity (Islam as what stands outside the domain marked political) and the *excess* of capacity (the militant’s ability to exert pressure on the political) that we see emerge here. A salient example of this is the way Kashmiri women and girl-children have emerged in the modern refugee regime as globally translatable figures of sympathy, while even boy-children become a problem for the humanitarian project over time as *potential* militants (Robinson 2013, 142).¹⁴

It must be noted here that this Indian grammar does not work with fixity along gender lines simply, but rather it is the proximity and distance to Islam (however marked by this grammar) that enables a certain discourse of gender to appear. For example, queer Muslim men hold a different position *vis-à-vis*

the Indian state's homonationalist project (Puar 2007), as do Muslim militant women. Kashmiri militant women are not treated as vulnerable feminized subjects, showing that proximity of Islam gauged via militancy disarticulates the state's grammar of womanhood as well.¹⁵ Kashmiri women also lose protection of the benevolent, sometimes-patriarchal, state when they are accused of being "Over Ground Workers," or those who give militants refuge. Gender grammar functions dually thus, both as a discourse that fixes and also loses symbolic integrity—there are glitches if you will—as it is mediated in relation to Islam. Therefore, rather than a disinterest in sexual difference, I noted earlier that gender confers *no certitude*, especially for those rendered outside a certain grammar of civilization.

Take the state's discourse in two related scenarios, for example. When Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi appeared on national television after overturning Article 35A (a clause that prevented non-Kashmiris from owning land in Kashmir), he drew on the grammar of gender. He reassured his audience that this would return Kashmir to "normalcy" and "free [it] of terrorism and separatism" (Modi 2019), ensuring that the acceleration of settler-colonialism should be seen as an explicit attempt to counter the force of Islam in the region. "The daughters of Jammu and Kashmir were deprived of the right that our daughters had in the rest of the states." But the state's narrative was not one of saving Kashmiri women. Rather it was one of women's leadership that made possible these changes to remove themselves from the constraints of Islamic law (of divorce and inheritance) that subjugated them to their men.

Just months later, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indian government was seized with renewed dread of the virulent Muslim man, coining terms such as "corona jihad," "bio jihad," and "thook jihad (spit jihad)" (Bhan and Bose 2020). The spread of the virus was considered part of an "Islamic conspiracy," positioning Muslim men as "human bombs" enacting "corona terrorism," against which India must be protected. Cordon and search operations intensified, as did the detention and torture of Kashmiri boys. India claimed that it was being "infiltrated;" "infected militants" were being "pushed into" India from the border (Kashmir Police 2020). Learning here from this fantasy and fear of penetration, one might ask, how is it that the state is always assumed in advance to be "patriarchal" when clearly the grammar of gender appears to hold no coherence one way or another, but rather is mediated, and disarticulated, through its relation to Islam? Sexual difference induces vertigo rather than giving meaning, we must recall (Scott 2011, 3–10). Here we see how the state's earlier claim to advocating for Kashmiri women becomes an obfuscation of a deathly identification in which the state itself, not needing to save Muslim women, is the one that needs to be saved against the Kashmiri man.

In a moment we will see that while not necessarily raced or marked by Islam in theory, the specific ways in which the universal category of masculinity is deployed produces anti-Islam carceral consensus between statist-saviorist

Feminism 1 and progressive-agency-oriented Feminism 2. The figure of patriarchy does not operate as such but gets coded and deployed within a shared global carceral imaginary, in a given historical moment, based on contingent practices and encounters.¹⁶ We see, then, in the lethal deployment of who stands opposed to this category of the reified (even if more properly intersectional) woman, “an instructive example of the interplay between exception and exceptionalism, whereby the deferred death of one population recedes as the securitization and valorization of the life of another population triumphs in its shadow” (Puar 2007, 3). Let us turn now to some more examples of the contemporary neocolonial encounter in Kashmir, in which both gender and Islam have become flashpoints of anxiety.

PRECARITY

The Indian state and its journalists, public intellectuals, and academics all illustrate how carceral consensus with militaristic projects passes for common sense.

Of course, there are those who readily become apparent as having explicit carceral-colonial allegiances who contend that Kashmiri children and women are being “tricked” and “brainwashed” into resistance, taken in by the Kashmiri man who remains a site of corruption (Shali 2021). Just months before a constitutional change revoked Kashmir’s semi-autonomous status, popular Indian journalist, Burkha Dutt’s program, hosted in Kashmir, flashed the headlines: “In Age of Machismo, Kashmir’s Women Speak Out” and “Beyond Terror & Territory: Women Breaking Barriers.” Dutt begins, “a lot of perspectives have been militaristic, masculine...full of machismo! But...what is the female perspective...?” Kashmir’s occupation recedes for the more important analysis along the lines of gender. The conclusion is that Muslim men overshadow life in the Valley and suck out all oxygen for a women’s rights movement to exist which could have the option to be indifferent to the political status of Kashmir. Article 35A, which prevents settler-colonialism, is deemed patriarchal because it infringes on women’s right to hold on to property. Support for the occupation is exaggerated, identification is enabled between the Indian feminist and Kashmiri women, and Islam—and Kashmir’s men as representatives of Islam—are uniquely demonized.

While this type of state feminism becomes readily visible as a tool of occupation and seems contradictory to Feminism 2, public intellectuals of the second category in fact contribute to producing carceral consensus with the state. To keep my task simple, I will focus on only three prominent Indian figures—Vijay Prashad, Urvashi Butalia, and Arundhati Roy. I acknowledge that there is considerable difference among these figures, and, to various degrees, all have voiced critique of the Indian project in Kashmir. Roy, for example, has been involved in civil society organizing in Kashmir, and unlike many other Indian allies is not merely an armchair spokesperson from Delhi that attempts to speak for Kashmiris. Further, she has been viciously attacked by the Indian

right for her prominent advocacy for Kashmir's self-determination, indicating her support goes beyond fair-weather allyship. In another vein, Butalia (2016) has been supportive of the work of various Kashmir scholars who challenge the sexual violence of the occupation. Thus, I make this critique not with condemnation or outright refusal, but as an invitation for those on the liberal-to-left end of the political spectrum to reconsider their myopia in relation to Islam. This vision of critique espouses not judgment or revelation, but rather vigilance toward what passes for common sense (Stoler 2015).

Prashad—an internationally renowned Marxist—dismisses Kashmir's armed revolt as Pakistan's proxy war, characterizing the rebels as outside Islamic enemies: "foreign, mainly Afghani Arab type mercenaries" (2002)—a view repeated on several occasions (see 2005, 2008, 2009), even as he critiques global convergences that create the Muslim as the figure of the enemy. He insists that the mass movement saw a recent "hardening" (2009), "internecine insanity" and "atavism of fugitive politics" (2009), and the "anachronistic" manifestation of a frustrated masculinity (2005), in an otherwise concessions-oriented movement. He argues that the demand for independence came around only after "reasonable" demands and "moderate" Kashmiri voices that sought dialogue with the Indian government failed (2009). Kashmiris are "alienated" (2018) and have "lost faith in the wisdom of the Indian constitution" (2009), as India makes policies that are "against the federalism of the constitution" which are also "applied in an undemocratic manner" (2019). For Prashad, the term occupation appears only in recent years and that too as an approximation, for example (emphasis mine in all cases): "rather than integrate the population in a humane manner" the Indian military "behaves *like* an occupying army" (2019) or that "this highly militarized region *resembles* an occupation" (2018). Prashad has largely maintained a securitization lens and advised that fighting terror with weapons/fatal blows acts as "incubators of a new generation of terrorists" (2008), and that "to defeat those who use terrorism" (2005)—rather than to end the occupation—one must "de-escalate" (2009). Kashmir's armed revolt is cast as hindering social development of the region (2005, 2009). Prashad unproblematically deploys the label of "terrorism" and insists that Kashmiris revile it (2005) and have a "right to decry" it (2002), as if the armed rebellion does not enjoy mass support. Strikingly, he states, "The Indian army *responds* [emphasis mine] with guns and with torture" (2002). The notion of a response (a term implying reciprocity and equivalence) is absurd in itself, but more so when coupled with the state's own estimates that indicate that there are 5000 Indian soldiers posted in Kashmir for every single armed Kashmiri militant. More centrally, the Muslim male militant is here positioned as deserving of (legal or illegal) violence. Prashad notes the heavy presence of the military "since the insurgency" (2002). The assumption always remains of a violence that could be deserved, as if the native could ever truly do something to provoke the ambush (Fanon [1961] 2004, 47).

Similarly, Butalia's volume *Speaking Peace: Women's Voices from Kashmir* (2002) begins with the claim that "all 'sides' in the battle use violence" and that Kashmiri women "face the combined wrath of the patriarchal practices of all men surrounding them, whether militants or security forces, of their own families, or indeed the state..." A Kashmiri woman at a humanitarian conference (held in India) is quoted as posing a rhetorical question to her audience about her friend's rape: "I want to ask how the militants' struggle for azadi, for liberation, will be advanced by the rape of this woman." The book thus not only positions itself as a question to the sincerity of the Kashmiri struggle for liberation but also makes two equivalences that are of note: the first between occupation violence and domestic violence, and the second of occupation violence with that of the violence of resistance. Notice the remarkable cascading effect of this equivalence: Kashmiri Muslim men are domestically violent, and militants are Kashmiri Muslim men—hence domestically violent Kashmiri men become and are militants; simultaneously, the militants are domestically violent men. More simply, Kashmiri Muslim men are violent, to women and to the Indian state (they do not choose peace). We can see how the securitization and valorization of the Kashmiri woman (rendered victim) emerge, as the Kashmiri Muslim man inversely disappears. The hyper-presence of the Kashmiri woman's authenticity, her words, her body, is in stark opposition to the absence of the Kashmiri militant upon whose absence hinges the entire possibility of this event (and this text). Thus, it is not a simple disappearance of the Kashmiri militant, but rather the *simultaneous* spectacularization and erasure that we see emerge in this text.

Arundhati Roy, in her article for *The Guardian*, demonstrates a similarly disappointing secular incomprehension. In describing what "*Azadi*" means to the Kashmiri people (beyond its literal translation to liberation), she mentions herself at a rally, surrounded by Kashmiris reciting the popular chant:

"*Azadi ka matlab kya?*" (What is the meaning of *Azadi*?).

"*la illaha illallah*" (There is no God but God).

Upon hearing this, Roy "asked a young woman whether freedom for Kashmir would not mean less freedom for her, as a woman." The conclusion is so compulsively automatic: *Azadi* envisioned within an Islamic form of life immediately means less freedom for women. Roy continues; the popular separatist leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, addresses the rally about the vision of ethical struggle given by the Quran which would lead to freedom.

The only way for the struggle to succeed, he said, was to turn to the Qur'an for guidance... I imagined myself standing in the heart of a Hindu nationalist rally being addressed by the Bharatiya Janata party... Replace the word Islam with the word Hindutva... replace the green flags with saffron ones... Is that what we should accept...? Monolithic religious states handing down a complete social and moral code, 'a complete way of life'?

Islam is deemed incompatible with her vision of an ideal, multicultural, and secular India. To even suggest that Islam, the *entirety* of it, is equivalent to the most right-wing manifestation of Hindu nationalism in the form of Hindutva is itself an enough of a damning statement. But Roy shifts then to the language of acceptance (not recognizing the further damage she is doing). She writes, “it was impossible to doubt or ignore the deeply Islamic fervour of the uprising...It was equally impossible to label it a vicious, terrorist jihad. For Kashmiris it was a catharsis.” This reductive caricaturing of Islam as catharsis allays the previous line’s anxiety about Islam through a cautious disclaimer that implies, “do not worry it was not terrorism.”

Roy continues: “Millions of us in India reject the Hindutva project. Our rejection springs from love....” Alongside this celebration of Indian progressive—nay, *correct*—dissent, she writes how it was painful to hear some of the chants in the Kashmir rally as they humiliated India’s poor. In these chants, Roy could see “the seeds of how easily victims can become perpetrators.” Roy’s misunderstanding of Kashmiri insurrectional humor that shames the occupier is painfully equivalent to cries of reverse racism, if not more sinisterly attached to the Indian state’s own analysis of its victimhood in which the Kashmiri Muslim man is the perpetrator. Roy does not comprehend that India is occupying Kashmir on claims of “developing” it, when it has failed to help even its own people, which is cause for the jeering irony of the chants. Her India is pluralistic, in which intellectual elites say “Not in My Name,” absolving themselves of responsibility for the very real brutalization of the Muslim community in exactly their very name. Following Anidjar’s analysis of Islam’s exclusion from the political, one can already see that Islam remains an impossibility within such a vision of a multicultural, secular India. What Roy neglects is that those “millions of loving” Indian elites who passionately reject Hindutva perform exactly this type of generic Islamophobia, as they get lauded for their solidarity efforts that merely suggest “do not worry, it is not terrorism.” The question must remain, why indeed does Islam produce anxiety? Why should somebody like Roy, in a mass of Muslims reciting for liberation, exhibit such irrepressible anti-Islamism but also a femme fragility that helps her identify with the Kashmiri woman? Does this not conjure the colonial phantasmagoria of Islam, similar to the Indian state’s justifications for an occupation that purportedly protects women *and the state itself*?

DISAPPEARANCE

While Islam is spectacularized in right-wing discourses and downplayed (if not demonized) in liberal-secular discourses about Kashmir, it simultaneously undergirds the present moment’s anxiety for both. On the one hand, there is the terrified state that needs to violently protect its precarity. On the other hand, in liberal-leftist discourse, Islamic organizing is seen as reactionary (a sign of a stunted or developing political maturity on the way to civil participation/disobedience), or one among the many ideologies available to organize

around, or at best, seen to stand in as a cultural tool (Roy's "catharsis") articulating a more real desire for secular autonomy. Islam is simplified as colonially codified "religion," indistinguishable from any other project invoking god, while anxiety about Islam as more-than-religion (seen in Roy's irritation with Islam as a "complete way of life") emerges. Perhaps it is useful to recall Anidjar here, in how this anxiety might signal the certain outsideness of the pressure Islam exerts on the political while being cast as apolitical ("catharsis"). Muneeza Rizvi (2021) notes that correctives to Islamic articulations of struggle (such as in the rebellious *takbir*: "*Allahu Akbar!*") seek to discipline "the unruly Muslim, whose disorderly anti-colonialism partakes in a different, longer genealogy than that of human rights or national liberation."¹⁷ The Kashmiri Muslim is necessarily excluded, disappeared, from the political, as one who has been rendered in excess and excessive through association with Islam.

The Fanonian notion of the "terrified consciousness" of the colonizer appears here on several scales (Ramchand 1969). Whether in outright authoritarianism or in *partial* support of resistance, the Kashmiri militant appears as someone to guard against. In the framework of the War on Terror's logic of preemption (Masumi 2015), the Kashmiri militant is one who has a potential for emerging and who can never be proven to not exist. The justification for continued occupation hinges on this fundamental antagonism with Islam as an excessive force that exerts pressure from a certain outside while simultaneously existing as an internal threat (of non-wholeness) to be guarded against.

If the impossibility of India-quia-India cannot be accepted, it is by excising the insurgent insistence on a difference (not simply fixed as gender difference), that India posits itself as whole (one nation, secular, democratic, committed to protecting its own and Kashmir's women). In the grammar of the occupation, if Kashmir registers as a fundamental impossibility in the state's ability to realize itself as whole, then how Kashmir is subtracted also matters. India without Kashmir is different than India without Kashmir embodied as Islam (Islam here masculinized in this gender grammar), or India without Kashmiri women is different than India without Kashmiri men. Therefore, it is not the absence of sexual difference that is operative, but rather the denuding of its destabilizing potential by absorbing it into a prescriptive relation of difference "between" men and women that produce Kashmiri masculinity as something to be located and disappeared—a question both of empirical disappearance and of the drama of nonbeing.

What is this empirical disappearance? Ather Zia (2019) notes the phenomenon of mass disappearance of Kashmiri men (who are taken without trace and without their bodies being produced to mark closure through death). If they are not disappeared, they are routinely killed in what is termed "encounters," which marks them—Zia argues—as "killable bodies." The non-vulnerability of the Kashmiri militant, who is deemed to deserve violence, is taken as a given by the sympathetic as well, as we can see in Prashad's account above. Militant deaths are deemed to be natural facts, part of the

nature of things, whereas the death of Indian soldiers, and even the occupied women and children, connote violations of human rights. If someone can be proven to be non-militant, there might even be outrage about the “fake” encounter staged by the Indian military to kill “civilian” Kashmiri men/boys. However, with the Indian state inaugurating ever newer categories such as “Over Ground Worker” (OGW), “militant associate,” “hybrid militant,” “white collar terrorist,” “cyber terrorist” (Yusuf 2021), civilian and militant is never an achievable distinction.

In a previous section, we saw Modi’s frank equation of the movement for liberation to terrorism which is then linked to extending Kashmiri Muslim women recognition. Prescriptive gender difference is continually reinscribed in this way. I earlier noted that Kashmiri refugees come to be situated differently in a politics of grievability *vis-a-vis* their gender. Even boy-children become potential militants. Further, Kashmiri refugees describe the torture of men through techniques such as electric shocks applied to genitals, noting this not only as sexual torture but as “genocidal acts (*nasl kushi*)... specifically described as a state program to cause impotence and end the Kashmiri descent lines, therefore rendering the territory of Jammu and Kashmir available for final colonization by (Indian) non-Kashmiris” (Robinson 2013, 214). This form of ethnic cleansing/disappearance enacted specifically through a targeting of the Kashmiri male body must be understood not within usual analyses of whether it is men or women who are more or less targeted. Rather, one must keep insisting on the Fanonian question, why indeed must the state enact paranoid castration of Kashmiri Muslim men? The predominance of terror inflicted on the Kashmiri Muslim male body—this hyperfocus on the Muslim phallus—must be taken seriously here to understand the Indian grammar of gender. If subjecting Kashmiri women to uprooted kinship structures, and the daily (sexualized) terror of living in a state of occupation, produces a particular grammar of the occupation, so too does the very real and serious killing, disappearing, torturing, imprisoning, or rendering impotent the Kashmiri Muslim man in turn perform a work of diminishing the Kashmiri ability to reproduce future generations within Islam. But more centrally, the attempt to eliminate Kashmiris through eliminating Kashmiri men points to *the intense masculinization of the Muslim* against which the state protects itself.

While this intense masculinization of the Muslim enables a demonization of the armed rebellion, this gender grammar also loses coherence. This can perhaps be seen in its most heightened form in funerals of the Kashmiri *shaheed* (martyrs who sacrifice their self in the way of Islam, witness to a state of injustice). In Kashmir, militants’ *janazas* (Islamic burial rites) are public events, drawing thousands of mourners, prominently women, who celebrate (since martyrdom is desired in Islam), reassert *la illaha illallah* (the Islamic declaration of faith), and promise ongoing resistance (Junaid 2018). The state suppresses the outpouring of support for these slain Kashmiri boys and men by imposing curfews to prevent public movement or by refusing to hand over bodies of the dead to their families to prevent a burial altogether. The

surveillant imperative of this move for enforced privacy (while granting unparalleled access to the state) paranoidly continues the Indian state's policy of marking public and political Islam as a threat. What is key is that here the state's grammar loses coherence since it is not clear who is a bigger threat—the Kashmiri man or the woman. It is both the figure—even in death—of the Muslim man as perpetual/uneliminatable threat, *and* the Muslim women singing, chanting, reasserting Islam through public demonstrations tied to militancy. From the liberal-left, same as the state, one hears a secular incomprehension mixed with admonition; “the *takbir* is read as a failure to recognize the true, *political* nature of the occupation” (Rizvi, 2021).

The Indian state's violence thus finds remarkable resonance in the liberal-left's generic Islamophobia as they seamlessly reproduce the fundamental antagonism propping up the occupation. In the case of Kashmir, in the discourse of fetishistic identification, occupation recedes and becomes mere analogy while any articulation within the form of Islam marks Kashmiris as terrorists, potential terrorists, or protectors of terrorists. The struggle in and for Kashmir, thus, necessitates that we learn how Islam is simultaneously spectacularized and erased within the logic of the War on Terror, in which both Feminism 1 and 2 remain complicit.

One might then re-examine the question posed at the scene of the conference I laid out above: Does occupation disappear feminism? Occupation becomes a prosthetic to uphold the always already more salient difference, the gender difference. The disappearance of the feminist-as-usual can perhaps be further understood to in fact be an *intensification*, in which occupation, rather than disappearing, in fact *coheres* carceral feminism or is cohered *through* carceral feminism.¹⁸ Whenever the desire to render visible and translatable the Kashmiri woman materializes, one might remember that it is simultaneously a demand to locate the Kashmiri man. Displacing the difference-that-exists onto a safer plane of shared identity enables a path to marginalization through identification with the Kashmiri woman. Against this logic, it is imperative to detect the stranglehold of certitude supposed to be produced through gender grammar, which each time it recurs, tightens the occupation's noose around all of Kashmir.

THERE ARE NO MEN IN KASHMIR

Then, let us ask after all, what about Kashmiri men? On the one hand, Kashmir has a disappearing population of men and boys. From those who are killed in fake encounters, to those who die prematurely from the Indian state's biopolitical warfare; those who are detained and tortured, only for their screams to be publicly broadcast for their families and neighbors; to those who give their lives as martyrs, to those who simply go missing—the men are disappearing. But aside from the empirical facts, where might one find the men who do not strike such terror into the heart of the securitized state or the sideline

sympathizer? Where might one find the men among the genre of the not-quite-human? When could one observe, and from which sovereign position, the practices of a thoroughly outnumbered and surrounded resistance movement, and then judicate whether it is “vicious, terrorist jihad”? Where can one find the men who are sufficiently civilians and not at all militant? What then, seriously, about the men of Kashmir? My answer remains: they cannot exist. And it is from this space of impossibility that the drama of freedom begins.

NOTES

1. Suleri (1989)’s enigmatic opening to her book “damns” her, as her subject (gender) runs evilly off in the direction of ocular evidence. Also see, Copjec (2004).
2. Savarna denotes those with Hindu caste privilege.
3. I thank Shefali Chandra for this striking phrasing that helped me question whether it is indeed the disappearance of feminism we are dealing with.
4. This is a condensed, and therefore by its nature partially fictive, account of events that unfolded over two different but related conferences. The events have been combined to protect the anonymity of certain figures.
5. The limits of colonial/orientalist Feminism I have been famously theorized by too many to sufficiently include, though a few names by way of an example include Chandra Mohanty, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Saba Mahmood. For Kashmir alone, there is extensive work complicating the notion of the absence of Kashmiri women’s agency (see Kaul and Zia 2018 for one collection of such scholarship).
6. I learn here from Thobani’s (2007) examination of the works of popular right wing *and* progressive feminists such as Judith Butler, who, while opposed to the invasion of Afghanistan, hold onto the notion of a threatening Islamist Other. Also see Toor (2012).
7. Zupančič (2012) asserts that gender studies’ discourse has appealed to ideas of cultural construction, multiplicity, mutability, performative ontology—all of which still maintain gender as something substantial and ignore the deadlock of the Real. Also see Scott (2011).
8. Zupančič is elaborating Lacan’s famous assertion: “The woman does not exist.” Additionally, contrary to popular misconceptions, in this Lacanian impossibility, “it is not only feminine but also masculine sexuality that is nowhere locatable; sexuality *as such* lacks a domain” (Copjec 2014).
9. I borrow the notion of a “grammar” of gender from Spillers’ (1987) “American grammar.” To clarify, I’m not suggesting that Spillers’ concept of the “ungendering” of Black “flesh” within the American grammar operates similarly for Islam/Kashmir. However, I borrow the consideration of gender-as-grammar, the symbolic integrity of which is able to be disarticulated.
10. Here I borrow from Homi Bhabha’s foreword to Fanon ([1952] 1986, xvi).
11. Fanon ([1952] 1986) writes, “it is not I who made meaning for myself, but it is meaning that was already there, pre-existing, waiting for me” (134); “the other...who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories” (111); “I became aware of my uniform” (114).

12. Scott (2011), in another context, examines France's obsession with the veil as one way of displacing anxiety about the unknowability of sexual difference (116).
13. For a fuller examination of how religion is eradicated as an identity category see Anidjar (2003, 42–43, 45, 163n7, 211n16). Additionally, Doha (2018) marks a distinction between “anti-Islamism” and anti-Muslim racism, the former being a nonidentitarian category. Hence, my interest lies not simply in how the Muslim man is racialized, but in how gender appears as a discourse mediated by Islam.
14. Mikdashi (2014) critiques a similar circulation of the refrain “women and children” as purportedly disproportionate victims of the settler-colonial occupation of Palestine, leading her to ask: “can Palestinian men be victims?”.
15. Asiya Andrabi (founder of *Dukhtaran-e-Millat*), along with several members of her organization, has been imprisoned and tortured on grounds of sedition and militancy same as her husband Ashiq Hussain Faktoo (founder of *Hizbul Mujahideen*)—both advocates of Islamic *jihad* for liberation of Kashmir. On women's militancy in Kashmir, see Parashar (2011).
16. Curry (2017), building off of Sylvia Wynter's work on gender as a genre of the human, argues that the idea that “all men” stage patriarchy is an obfuscation of white power, when certain men have never been human. The study of gender then must become a study of a particular encounter, in which there is no a priori context or origin of masculinity, and no subject of history who is readily assumed to be gendered a particular way (Sinha, 1999).
17. Rizvi (2021) provides an extensive critique of the dismissal of Palestine as an Islamic issue by the liberal-left, a critique extremely pertinent to Kashmir as well. Also see, Amin and Mushtaq (2019).
18. This is not unique to Kashmir but in fact a recurring strategy of colonization. See Fanon ([1959] 1965, 35–42).

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